2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FR5 Ngoni FR5

was still more clearly demonstrated by the attitude of the Ngoni 'of the dispersion', who returned for visits, some frequently and others at varying intervals, to their former homes though they were no longer in a political sense subjects of the Ngoni Paramount.

In the Group A systems, not only is the Paramount the political head of a culturally and ethnically heterogeneous state, but he is also a territorial ruler, and everyone living within the boundaries of his state is his subject. This was peculiarly a characteristic of the so-called conquest states, when effective administrative control was established within recognized boundaries after the conquest or surrender of neighbouring peoples. In the chapter on the military organization of the Ngoni, it will be seen how the nature of the military tenure of *alumuzana*, and the relation of groups of conquered villages known as *amilaga* to the central villages of the Paramount and *alumuzana*, emphasized the limits within which Ngoni authority was effective. One of the often repeated grievances of the older Ngoni was that the Europeans 'arrived too soon', before the Ngoni were able to establish effective authority over the whole country.

Two further points emerge in the introductory essay to *African Political Systems* which relate to the balance of forces within the Group A type of state and to the position of the Paramount. Both these points will be illustrated in Part II. The first concerns the relationship of the subordinate chiefs (called 'local chiefs' in the essay) to the central authority. They represented the central authority in the areas where they ruled, and they represented the people under them and their needs to the central authority. When the older Ngoni were talking about the Paramount in pre-European days, much emphasis was laid on his control of the chiefs and *alumuzana*, and on the obligation they felt to visit the Paramount in his village frequently, in order that they might appear to be carrying out his orders and not usurping undue authority. The older Ngoni also laid stress on the accessibility of the Paramount to all his people, provided—and it was an important proviso—that a man came to him with an intermediary, either his headman or his *mulumuzana*.

The final point of comparison between Group A systems and the Ngoni kingdoms is the mystical values bound up with kingship. This will be discussed in the chapter on the Paramount (Chapter II, Part II) and it is related also to the ancestor cult. The Ngoni Paramounts were more than ruling monarchs; they were the symbol of the unity of their state; in pre-European days the Paramount was the head of the army; and the ritual at the accession and at the death of a Paramount was related to the fertility of the land and the prosperity of the people.

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

as young men, and had known the independence and supremacy of the Ngoni kingdoms. The expression 'everything is finished now' was often on their lips, especially when faced by new demands from the government, or by rebellious attitudes from their former subject peoples.

'The middle generation' was the term applied to the men who had as children known the Ngoni kingdoms in their prime. Though they had never fought as warriors nor been enrolled in an age-regiment, some of them had gone to the wars as young boys, carrying the gear for their older brothers. Many of these men, especially in the North, came under the influence of the missions, and became teachers, clerks, ministers and hospital assistants, married Christian wives and brought up their children in Christian, but Ngoni Christian, families. These men never lost their attachment to the Ngoni way of living, and many of them had made a successful synthesis of the old and the new ways. They stood, as they said, 'between' the generations, for they knew and understood both sides of an immensely different way of living and standard of values. Their children were 'the generation of today', who had no personal experience of past Ngoni ascendancy, and who took mission schooling and working for wages as a normal feature of their life.

When I lived in Ngoni villages, such as those described briefly in this chapter, Ngoni values and attitudes dominated social relationships. There was a determined struggle on the part of all responsible for child training to inculcate these Ngoni ideas and ways of living. The senior men and women were aware of the constant and increasing infiltration into their way of living of ideas, attitudes and behaviour coming from other ethnic groups in their midst. In addition their culture was being undermined by European influences in the schools, in the money economy, and from modern political developments, emphasizing an all-Nyasaland sentiment rather than loyalties based on ethnic grouping. Ngoni pride of race, and a consciousness that they had a

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

178 culture worth preserving, inspired them to put up a fight
● 829 against all that threatened the values inherent in their way
177 of living. It was perhaps the struggle of a disappearing aristocracy. But Ngoni fathers thought that the principles of education on which they brought up their children were worth a struggle.

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

answers to them somewhere, then there have been some vital omissions in the narrative.

Clues to this study

In relating this study to other field studies and analyses of socialization techniques and processes, I have not attempted to present here any general assessment of similar or related studies, much less any review of the field as a whole, since I have touched on both in earlier publications.[1] Instead I have brought into this chapter one or two clues or guide lines from other sources which seemed to me to elucidate some of my problems, particularly in regard to four main aspects of this study, which have already been mentioned in Chapter I and which to a large extent set the limits and determine the emphases of this book. The 'true Ngoni' were a society within a society, a distinct cultural group within the Ngoni kingdom. This society of theirs had sharp edges, definable and recognizable limits, and that partly accounted for their own awareness of themselves as distinct from, though at so many points connected with, the neighbouring peoples. Their culture, that is their way of living within this society, had definite values which they strove to maintain, and this was one of the reasons why the ideal Ngoni personality pattern, and their endeavour to see it reproduced in each child, was easy to recognize. In order to safeguard their society and maintain their culture they exercised a fairly rigid social control over the upbringing of their children, which resulted in something approaching a 'system' of training and educating children. Set against this conservation of traditional values however was the reality and extent of changes due to external circumstances mentioned at the end of Chapter I. In the face of these changes the Ngoni showed that they could adapt some of them to their own purposes, and they made use of the schools, for example, once they approved of them, to help adjust their

[1] See Appendix (i)

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

respect to all adults, whether Ngoni or not, whether of their family, or helpers in the household, or former captives. If children did not so behave to old and poor people, they were punished and made to feel ashamed as if they had failed to honour their own relatives.

A Ngoni elder when speaking of the testimony of early travellers in Ngoniland to the good manners found in Ngoni households said: 'Such honouring of each other came to the Ngoni because they liked living together without any scattering as was the custom of other Nyasaland people. . . . . Such honour was not shown by young people for fear of being beaten, but because all children were well taught that this behaviour was right and proper for the upbuilding of the land.'

The emphasis in this quotation is clearly on the connexion between personal behaviour and the integrity and prosperity of the Ngoni kingdom. When Ngoni elders were talking about child training and its effect on the future of the Ngoni people, they made constant reference to 'those who spoil the land'. The phrase was the same as taking the roof off a hut, i.e. destroying it for the purpose for which it was built. This determined emphasis on behaviour illustrated the Ngoni intention of regulating personal contacts within their society, so that harmonious relations would build up the society which quarrels and factions would destroy, and indeed had partly destroyed in some of the historic secessions from the kingdom. Harmonious personal relations are perhaps the covert if not the overt aim of all human societies from the individual family outwards. We see this however in sharp outline in Ngoni life, partly because they were acutely aware of the vulnerability from external influences of their society and way of living.

Two very ancient folk-tales illustrate Ngoni thinking about keeping their kingdom and society intact and maintaining their code of polite behaviour.

The first was taken down by me from a very old man who

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

115 had heard it from his grandmother. She had been a young
539 Ngoni woman at the time the Ngoni crossed the Zambezi,
829 and hence this story was said to have had its origin in the Ngoni former homeland in Natal.

The story of Heva

539 At the beginning of the creation of the world there was a woman of reddish colour whose name was Golela, and she had two children. The name of the older one was Heva, and of the second one Malusi. My grandmother, Madakacha, said that Malusi was the cause of our herds of cattle becoming smaller. When Malusi was herding cattle on the river plains where they were feeding, he kept on disturbing them and driving some away from the rest.

At this time Heva was staying with his mother. Her work was to keep watch over the sun so that the birds did not peck it, and Heva helped her by flapping away the flies which were troubling her.

Their mother Golela asked Heva, 'Where is your brother? What is he doing?' Heva replied, 'There he is yonder, disturbing your cattle on the river plain.' Then Golela called Malusi and said to him, 'Go. Choose what you want and depart. Go with them far away. What is left here is for Heva.'

After Malusi went away, all that remained on the river plain belonged to Heva, including the animals and the birds and the crops, but the cattle were reduced in number.

My grandmother used to say about this story, 'We who are descended from Heva are the victims of this separation between the brothers. Because Malusi in the beginning of the world took away many of the cattle of his mother's house, we have never had large herds of cattle since then.'

The Ngoni saw in the archaic form of this folk-tale several meanings. It was one of their traditional creation myths. It supported their belief that they were once owners of vast

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

the observer or anthropologist. One such observer might pursue the line suggested by the use of different persons of the verb and different pronouns in personal contacts, and the values inherent in such standardized usage. Another might choose to examine the institution of the boys' dormitory and its contribution to the total value system. Another might take the different emphases in bringing up boys and girls in relation to the fact that men were the permanent element in village society and that girls left the village on marriage. A dozen more examples could be taken from the narrative chapters of this study and usefully followed up. They would all illustrate, in the first instance, the subjective nature of the initial selection, whether the final results of several different investigations made a coherent integrated system or not. They would also illustrate the uncharted area of such studies, where there is little to guide the observer and the analyst, in spite of the growing interest in recent years in studying the value systems of non-literate societies.

Among the leads which I found most useful has been Professor Monica Wilson's *Good Company*, to which I referred in Chapter I, where she associated cultural values with the age-village system in Nyakusa society. I owe much also to help and suggestions given to me at Harvard by Professor Cora Du Bois and Dr Ethel Albert, and to Professor Kluckhohn and his associates in discussions on their published and projected series on the study of values.

The relation between Ngoni values and their ideal personality pattern is based on the study of their society and culture described in my earlier book, and on the analysis of their system of bringing up children in this book. I referred in Chapter II to certain values as group values and to others as personal values. I am not sure that the distinction is a valid one, but it is a convenient form of classification and it corresponds closely to the Ngoni way of thinking. They were continually referring to their society, or a local community in it, as if it were an integrated whole, and to the effect of

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

829 individuals upon the cohesion of that society through their behaviour and actions. This was illustrated in the phrase so constantly used by them, and referred to already several times: 'He is spoiling the land,' or the converse, quoted in Chapter I: 'Young people were well taught that this behaviour was right for the upbuilding of the land.'

181 Among these so-called group values the first of all, and pre-
829 eminent above all, was the value of keeping together. Taught by bitter experience that personal quarrels could lead to political secessions and to the diminution of the power and influence of the Ngoni kingdoms, the focus of much of their thinking was on maintaining cohesion whether in small units or in large. I think the Ngoni were the only people in Nyasa-
[641] land where individuals and families were not allowed to
[166] leave the villages to live elsewhere without permission of the
[621] chief or headman. In the local courts there were frequent cases in which the accused had been guilty of leaving with-
[687] out permission. This illustration could be used also to indicate the second of the group values. I have called it dominance for want of a better term. It involves the exercise of authority, political and legal, over their own and subject peoples, the determination to exact obedience, influenced by a feeling of paternal responsibility for all over whom authority was claimed. This was an ambivalent sentiment affecting the attitude of the ruler and his relations with the ruled, and was the basis of the court case quoted in Chapter VI, when a chief made a judgement against his own son for adultery with a poor man's wife. The third group value was that of mutual aid and trust within the in-group, in order to secure its cohesion. This was the integrating principle of the 'house' system, described briefly in Chapter I and mentioned in many other contexts. Mutual trust and aid had been in the past the main element in the behaviour of men in their own regiments, in the mutual relation of warrior with warrior, both when on campaigns and when living together in the villages.

181 The four personal values were inherent in the acceptance
577

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

affairs. Boys and young men were expected to be physically strong, and tough in the sense of being able to do hard tasks, walk long distances, dance for hours on end, and put up with hardships without grumbling. The senior men, as we saw earlier in this chapter hated to see idleness and set great store by young men working hard and persistently at any tasks undertaken. Several proverbs illustrated this quality and were used with effect when boys were found hanging round in the village doing nothing: 'Loitering eats the owner,' 'Laziness is eating dung,' 'The garden will not be tilled if you stop hoeing it.'

Other qualities desired in young men were all connected with the values of staying together as a family and as a village group, and of fostering mutual aid and trust within the groups of males in the dormitory and in the 'house'. It was believed that they ought to be acutely sensitive to the opinion of their contemporaries, a lesson which they learned from early days in the dormitory. To an insensitive person, showing intolerance and hard-heartedness they said: 'Were you made with dog's bones?' for dogs' bones were thought to be hard and unfeeling; or, 'You have a heart like a crocodile.' A fear of social ostracism was fostered all the time and expressed in the proverb: 'The bird eats in his own field.'

There were innumerable proverbs about willingness to co-operate in all the necessary tasks which fell to the young men, such as communal hoeing described in Chapter VII, or digging the grave at a funeral. 'The eyes for seeing,' 'One arm cannot crush a louse,' 'A river grows by its little streams,' 'The heifer grows by giving it more food'—these and many others were used to admonish those who held back and to encourage those who joined in willingly. Other proverbs warned against promises of help which were not kept. 'You will eat those of the axe but not those of the hoe' was said to someone who had counted on noisy assertions of forthcoming help, like the sounds made by the chopping of an axe, and not in quiet persistent help, like the smooth almost silent

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

action of the hoe. 'They are our kin according to their eyes' was said as a reminder of misplaced trust in those who appeared to be helpful but were not really.

Readiness to take advice both from their age-mates and from older men was another quality held to be desirable in young men. Proverbs illustrating this were: 'He that refuses instruction will be surprised by blood,' and 'He remembers that he fell; he forgot that he was hurt.' As often with proverbs, there were others with a contrary emphasis which were sometimes used as a retort to the former ones, or in self-defence. 'The inheritance was eaten by those worthy of it' was intended as a rejoinder not to interfere in other people's affairs, when unwanted advice was offered. 'The body is felt by its owner' was sometimes said to encourage a man to stick to his own opinion. On the other hand a too abrupt rejoinder, especially to an older person, was regarded as discourteous, and onlookers said 'You cause the spittle to be dry' to express extreme disapproval.

Ngoni personality in a changing culture

The direction of the training of boys had been formerly towards military life, and towards the qualities which made effective fighting men, and emphasized loyalty to leaders and camaraderie in the regiments. This emphasis on military preparedness was however never the sole emphasis in Ngoni training, and hence when warfare came to an end, there remained traditional spheres of influence and activity which were an integral part of life in the Ngoni kingdoms, as well as new spheres of activity opened up by missions, the administration, the trading companies and the labour recruiters.

The traditional forms of activity were found in Ngoni local government which included the chief's administration and the courts of law; family and village affairs including the building up of herds and buying and selling cattle; and ritual life. The new kinds of activity included occupations such as teacher, minister, clerk, store assistant, houseboy,

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

606 good man behaves towards his father-in-law with obedience and respect, and that he is rewarded by the gifts of beer sent to his father by his wife's father. If these gifts are not made, then the man must be 'bad' or his father-in-law 'fierce' or 'cruel'.

581 There is one type of marriage in which none of these ceremonies are performed. This is what is known as the 'poorly fixed marriage'* 829 which lies on the borderland between marriage and concubinage. People do not expect a 'poorly fixed' marriage to last long, and this expectation is based more on their estimation of the characters of the couple involved than on a consideration of the absence of marriage ceremonies and payments. If a couple, who have shown by their general behaviour that they are fickle and quarrelsome, begin to live together without going through any of the formalities of marriage, people speak of their marriage as 'poorly fixed'. If the union breaks up there is no divorce procedure and the couple merely go their own separate ways. The categorization 'poorly fixed' is not applied to all marriages in which there are no marriage [583] payments, for poverty is usually regarded as a valid excuse for not offering money or animals or for not brewing beer. It is rather poverty of character and love of promiscuity and fickleness that lead to 'poorly fixed' marriages.

581 Sometimes a marriage which begins as 'poorly fixed' lasts for some time and becomes accepted as a proper marriage. An example of this is the marriage of Rachel and Esau (p. 63). In 1946 I was told this was a 'poorly fixed' marriage and that it would not last. In 1949 opinion had changed, and as we have seen, Esau succeeded in making the legalization payment for his wife. Even if his money had been refused his position would still have been better than it was in 1946 for he had shown that he could live with Rachel for three years without an undue amount of quarrelling and she had not [583] drifted off to some other man. By making the legalization payment Esau made his rights over her more certain.

[829] People who live in 'poorly fixed' marriages are not despised for doing so, but are rather pitied for their moral inability to make a 'well fixed' marriage. They are never so sure of the support of their relatives and neighbours as they would be otherwise. A man who 586 has not made the legalization payment may be supported by his wife's relatives when she commits adultery if they think that he is a good husband and that it is she who is at fault in the matter. But if a man neglects his obligations towards his wife's parents and [606] in particular does not approach them formally at the beginning of the marriage to tell them of his desire to marry their daughter, they may turn on him if he tries to exercise rights over the woman. In court, the wife's father may look at his son-in-law, who perhaps has been his neighbour for many years, and say 'Who is this man? We do not know him'; and the court will refuse to recognize his claims.

* *Ukwali owayawaya.*

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

parents have different fields of interest, but the two fields overlap in the well-being of the married couple. At first there is much formality between them, and intermediaries are used whenever possible. Later they become more friendly. In the setting of the village meeting some parents appear to see themselves as allied in wisdom with the opposite parents against the foolishness of the younger generation whose immature behaviour has been the cause of the meeting. At other times, they may act to defend the rights and happiness of their child against the claims of the rival kin group. We have seen in the story of Daniel and Deborah [21] how yet another alignment can occur when both sets of parents support one spouse against the other. There is no simple way in which these different alignments can be predicted, for they are in fact the outcome of the continually changing pattern of social relationships within the local community. In general, all people wish to preserve the existing configuration of relationships, to support the interests of their children and to maintain the values of their society. In any particular situation, these goals may be mutually incompatible, and there is no over-riding principle, such as agnatic descent or a state-enforced code of law, to which all decisions can be referred. The tenuousness of the cohesion of the local group of kin is reflected in the varying alignments of parents in marital quarrels.

We tend to think of quarrels as socially disruptive, and in so far as they are not resolved they do lead to the break-up of existing groupings and the formation of new ones. Yet from another point of view, quarrelling is as much a cohesive process as is common participation in marriage ceremonial. Indeed, just as we have seen already [22] that a ceremony of marriage may be a vehicle for expressing hostility between kin groups as well as recognition of common interest, so a quarrel may lead to increased solidarity between kin groups as well as express hostility between spouses. By taking steps to resolve a quarrel, one kin group is brought into face-to-face contact with the other; there is visiting between their villages and mutual hospitality in somewhat the same way as in marriage ceremonial. The two groups may join to censure the erring spouse. The censured person may feel deserted by his (or her) parents but his father and his father-in-law may have come closer together.

The formality that characterizes relations between parents at the beginning of a marriage gradually disappears. A man or woman can always seek shelter and hospitality at the hut of a *child's parent-in-law* and in the final ceremony of marriage, when the married couple enter the wife's mother's hut, the two pairs of parents sit together and discuss the merits and limitations of their respective offspring. It is regarded as incestuous for a man to marry a woman whom he calls *child's parent-in-law*. By so doing his son's wife

[21] See above, p. 82.
[22] See above, pp. 76f.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

178 change. In the field of marriage we have seen that it was the
648 conscious intervention of the Administration which forced the abolition of the death penalty for adultery. It is to some extent due to the Administration, with its emphasis that women must have rights equal to those of men, that divorce is more frequent than it was, though this result does not seem to have been planned. In the eyes of the Administration the important fact is that it is more difficult for a woman to get a divorce among the Ngoni than among the Cewa. Of recent years it has been more concerned with the increase in concubinage, prostitution and juvenile delinquency in the towns, and has introduced measures designed to check the flow of women and children from the rural areas to the towns. As we have seen, one result has been that it is possible for rights *in genetricem* to be enforced in inter-tribal marriages, and bridewealth has therefore more significance in these marriages than in marriages within the tribe.

● 889 The Ngoni people themselves have, on the whole, accepted the
181 changes passively and regretfully. The one deliberate constructive action appears to have been the law made in about 1944 that the legalization payment shall be at least thirty shillings. Apart from this, the Ngoni appear to have been overwhelmed by events. The frustrations of the present time are all attributed to the coming of the Whites, and this in turn provides the reason why nothing can be done to change things. The past, 'the time of peace', is glorified and simplified, and to some extent reinterpreted in terms of the new values which have been acquired in the interim. Thus, some informants said that the Ngoni never fought other tribes, but only invited people to join the Ngoni kingdom. People like to assert dogmatically that adulterers were always killed, that every man always paid bridewealth, that women always married whom they were told, and only reluctantly admit, on closer questioning, that there were sometimes exceptions to these rules. The imputed rules of the past have become the 'customs' of the present, and the adjective *Ngoni* is applied not to what the Ngoni people do today but to what they like to think they did in the virtuous past. *Ngoni* marriage (*ukwati wacingoni*) is marriage in which all the ceremonial observances are carried out in detail, 'snuff-box' and bridewealth are paid, the woman is obedient and fertile, the man dutiful and respectful towards his wife's parents, and in which the couple 'live well together'. This is contrasted with modern marriage (*ukwati wamakono*) in which there is no bridewealth, few ceremonies, little attention paid to obligations towards kin, and in which the woman sues successfully for divorce. Modern marriage is an invention of the Whites, designed to worry the Ngoni. The Whites have conquered the Ngoni, they are the owners of the country, and there is nothing to be done except to keep alive the knowledge of the past.[12]

[12] *Cf.* Read, op. cit. 'The moral code . . .', and 'Traditions and prestige . . .', *passim*.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

This attitude of resignation, while still very common, has to some extent been replaced by a more constructive attitude among members of the Native Authority bureaucracy. Chiefs, councillors and other officials have considerable political power and are encouraged to use it by the Administration, whose policy it is to strengthen the hand of the Native Authority.[13] Court members introduce changes in law with some confidence, although this is still done under the guise of a re-enforcement of a forgotten traditional law. Chiefs, under increasing pressure from their people and the Administration, endeavour to take action to modify social life in their areas. As yet political action is not very sophisticated, and the workings of the Administration are not well understood. In those fields of activity where Administrative interest is strongest, such as price control, food production, and the amalgamation of villages, the Ngoni response tends to be in moral rather than in political terms. It is wrong that the price of maize should be so low, the good man knows best how to cultivate his own garden, people in a village must live peacefully together. By contrast, in the field of marriage, where the Administration is comparatively disinterested, and where the wishes of the Administration, missions and Ngoni do to a large extent coincide, the bureaucracy has been able to act in a more positive manner. The thirty shillings law is one of the rare legislative acts of the Ngoni chiefs and people, and it is significant that the law was not made until 1944, fifteen years after the passing of the Native Authorities Ordinance. It is said that the law was made so that women could be punished for adultery in the same way as men. At the meeting at which the law was agreed upon, it was also decided that bridewealth should be a minimum of six pounds or one cow. Whereas the ruling about legalization payments is still remembered and increasingly followed, the bridewealth rule has been largely forgotten. This attempt to check adultery by increasing the legalization payment was in general agreement with the wishes of the Administration and more or less with the wishes of the missions. It was possible to envisage a decrease in adultery due to a clarification of rights *in uxorem* without any other major structural changes, whereas the re-introduction of bridewealth as a universal payment could only be envisaged in terms of a return to the patrilineal virilocal residential system of 'the time of peace'. It would hardly have been possible for the Native Authority to have restored the old system had they wished to do so. Ngoni village life is now part of a system wider than the chiefdom and there are other ways of acquiring wealth and status than within the residential system and at the pleasure of the Paramount Chief.

11. Marriage in an omnidirectional kinship system

We may characterize the change from the old order to the new

[13] Cf. Barnes, op. cit. 'Some aspects of political development . . .'.

8: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5

in general, encouraged co-operation between tribes and have treated all tribes as equals. They have emphasized the values of peace rather than a war, and have condemned pagan rites. In the light of this teaching legends have been modified to conform to modern values. The barbarity of the raids has been minimized and the good qualities of the old military discipline have been extolled. Sometimes men say that the old armies never fought but only danced, or that people from other tribes were not captured but all joined the Ngoni of their own free will (as in fact some did). It is said that there was never any ancestor-worship; the names of the Paramount Chief's ancestors were merely mentioned in prayers "as King George is mentioned now". This process by which the Ngoni conquerors of yesterday are made to look like the European conquerors of today is no new phenomenon. The Ngoni identified themselves with European rather than with their matrilineal neighbours even before the European conquest. Wiese, himself the main agent of their defeat, wrote, "They are very proud, looking down on all the other tribes with contempt, and think they show great courtesy whenever they assure the European traveller that the Whites may be related to them."[4]

Another traveller, arriving from the south in 1896, relates how he ran into an armed patrol on the outskirts of Ngoni country. His own carriers ran away but he called out to the patrol that he was a friend of the Paramount Chief, speaking in Zulu. He then heard them saying, "He is an Ngoni and a white man."[5] My own informants told me that the old Ngoni language was closer to English than to Nyanja.

This reinterpretation of the past in the light of the present has not produced a consistent picture of a proto-European society. The inconsistencies of the present remain and are reflected in the ambivalent attitude adopted to the past. Although in one context people recall that everything was well ordered and peaceful in the past, in other contexts they dwell on the unlimited power of the Paramount Chief and the fierceness of his warriors. An aristocratic man once said to me at a beer party, "If this was the old days I would kill all these Cewa drinking here." Yet the general impression which people usually try to convey is of a disciplined, proud, and successful people.

This picture is accepted not only by Ngoni themselves but also by Europeans. For us it is one part of the good old days when Africans still smiled and were nature's gentlemen. Our picture of the Ngoni contains fewer concessions to contemporary White values, for the very distinction between Whites now and Blacks then increases the attractiveness of the picture. Ancestor worship and polygyny are not unwelcome in a Black Arcadia.

Ngoni nowadays compare themselves with their European and Indian neighbours and envy their apparent power and wealth. They seek to rationalize their own relative failure in terms of their past. It is in this connection

4. Wiese, *Geschichte*, pp. 200 f.

5. Later, when he had satisfactorily answered questions on Zululand geography, Mp'zeni said of him, "He is a chief . . . he is an Angoni, one of us." Deare, *Slave Raiders*, pp. 19 and 25.

U

8: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5

181 that the defeat of 1898 is important. Although they claim to have conquered
186 all their African neighbours, Ngoni do not claim success over the British.
Instead, defeat at the hands of the British is cited in explanation of every
648 present-day failure and of every departure from traditional practice. Ngoni
186 say, "If we had not been defeated we would not have lost our land and we would not now go hungry"; and "If we had not been defeated the tribes would not have been mixed up and we could follow our customs properly", [729] and so on. In the past, captives taken by the Ngoni were rapidly indoctrinated with Ngoni ways and themselves became proud Ngoni; Ngoni complain that now, although captured by Europeans, they never become Europeans.

538 The general legends of the past from which these notions are derived are
814 common knowledge. In the main they are passed on orally and are maintained by the teaching of tribal history in schools, the appeals to old military traditions, when recruiting for the Northern Rhodesia Regiment, the conversations of planters comparing one tribe with another as labourers, by the reports of administrators and by the writings of ethnologists.

643 The link between the Ngoni of today and their illustrious forebears is also
182 symbolized in the office of the Paramount Chief. He bears the name of his [551] warrior great-grandfather, and the formal aspects of his relationship to his people are explained by reference to his ancestors' achievements. He cannot attend funerals or take part in some of his own marriage ceremonies because "he has already conquered all others"; he cannot be expected to walk through the bush with the District Officer because "he has already conquered the whole world". He basks in his great-grandfather's invincibility, for in this context the defeat of 1898 is forgotten. The relationship between the Paramount Chief and his eleven minor chiefs is partly determined by the distribution of power in different branches of the royal lineage before the European conquest, and the division of the country into these minor chiefdoms is a visible reminder of that distribution.

829 Associated with these tales of military exploits and royal power are myths
178 about former customs. Ngoni say that in the old days they used to hunt, or marry, or build villages, in a particular way and that now they do differently. Frequently when I asked what happened in such-and-such a situation I would be told what my informant thought would have happened before 1898 rather [583] than what he had seen happen now. Thus if we ask what payments do Ngoni make in marriage we are told that there are two payments, "snuff-box" and bridewealth, consisting of one or more beasts. Further inquiry reveals that these payments are now made only infrequently and that the period referred to is before 1898. More detailed investigation suggests that in many pre-1898 marriages they were not made and that when they were made they did not always consist of beasts. Ngoni do not deny these facts but they do deny their relevance. To them the distinctively Ngoni way of marrying is with these two payments, and it is this process alone which merits the vernacular adjective—*cingoni*. They regret that people no longer marry in this way and

8: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5

blame the Europeans for it; but it remains part of the distinctive cultural heritage of the tribe.

As we might expect, notions of this kind do not provide sanctioned standards of conduct nor ideal patterns towards which Ngoni strive. They may be used to explain or justify a state of affairs, as we have seen, but they do not directly determine action. An individual who departs from traditional custom, in these terms, is not necessarily censured. Indeed, men who are knowledgeable about the glorious past do not follow traditional ways any more than do less-well-informed people. According to tradition the Ngoni are a virilocal people, yet if a man goes to live with his wife's relatives his own kinsfolk cannot force him to return by appeal to this virilocal tradition. Traditionally a man avoids his mother-in-law. Yet I once saw an aristocratic man, a great authority on traditional history, on leave from work sitting on a verandah chatting with his mother-in-law. I said to him, "I thought a man should avoid his mother-in-law." He laughed and replied, "Yes, so he should. This behaviour is disgusting, and as soon as I come to live here permanently I shall see that customs are properly followed."

In certain situations the Fort Jameson Ngoni appear as a tribe in contrast to other tribes. The tribe is an administrative unit, with its own chiefs, its own area and sometimes its own District Officer. Representatives from each tribe in the region sit together to form the Native Urban Court and the Provincial Advisory Council. The Ngoni representatives on these bodies tend to present distinctively Ngoni views to contrast with the views of their colleagues. Thus there may be a discussion on wills. There is an Ngoni view, a Cewa view, and so on. The Ngoni representative repeats the old story about bridewealth, virilocal residence, the rights of the eldest son, and these are recorded as being the Ngoni custom in the matter. Even when discussing such an apparently modern issue as wills, the tendency is to go back to this mythical past. It is in terms of this past, in reality as well as in myth, that Ngoni are different from their neighbours. In the present, as contrasted with Europeans, Ngoni and Cewa are much the same. Ngoni pay bridewealth in the same way as the English eat roast beef. It is a national characteristic, but one located in the minds of men rather than observable in their actions or their aspirations. Instead of the scarifications and totemic observances which distinguish their neighbours, Ngoni express their tribal identity by having distinctive customs which, conveniently, need not be followed.

In the Native Urban Court a similar process appears to operate, but here, unlike at the Advisory Council, there is a greater need to come to grips with real situations which require action, and tribal distinctiveness is tempered with practical reality. In the purely Ngoni Native Courts appeals are made to traditional practice in a different way. The courts are required by the Administration to follow tribal custom and people know that the courts are bound in this way. In fact, however, the courts have continually to deal with new situations and to make decisions which are unprecedented. This is done

8: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5

under the guise of drawing attention to some good Ngoni custom which has been neglected. Thus, for example, a man came to court saying that he was always quarrelling with his wife and that he wished to divorce her. The bench granted the divorce and awarded the woman 30*s.* damages. The litigant protested. The junior member of the bench, a man aged about 25 years, said, "Don't you know, it has always been the custom in this court to award 30*s.* damages against men who divorce their wives?" Yet this was a comparatively recent practice and the litigant's protest seemed, to me, to be quite justified. The young man had been on the bench only about eighteen months. Even without Administrative stimulus, deliberate acts of legislation are not unknown among the Ngoni, but they require considerable discussion and probably a tribal meeting. It is easier, particularly for a court member as junior as the man in question, to appeal to the unwritten corpus of tribal custom when introducing a new rule. An analogous process in our own society is perhaps concealed under the fiction that judges do not make law. Ngoni do not quote specific precedents in court, and in this undocumented environment new decisions, if they are not soon challenged, become part of what has always been the custom since time immemorial.

We may then summarize by saying that their common store of notions about the past provides Ngoni with a means of distinguishing themselves from similar groups at a time when the cultural distinctions between these groups are in fact becoming less and less. In the Courts, appeals to the value of traditional custom are made to gain acceptance for new rulings, while in ordinary life breaches of custom are widespread and are not censured.

When we consider legends associated with particular groups within he tribe the picture is rather different. Separate groups in the population remember, and sometimes act in the light of, particular incidents in the past which link them to other similar groups. Thus village A is linked with village B because of some incident in the past when the erstwhile leader of A captured the leader of B, or because at one time the leaders of A and B were brothers. These incidents, and the present inter-group relations with which they are associated, are not known universally but only by the groups concerned and by those near them. Yet in many ways these incidents are of greater practical significance than the more widely known tribal history. The relationships to which they give rise, or rather such of these relationships as have persisted, are remembered at funerals, in the formal exchanges of beer, and in the settlement of quarrels. There are at first glance no sanctions to maintain relationships of this kind, and indeed the very separate existence of two villages A and B may be due to a quarrel followed by a split. But although, for example, when an old woman dies in A there is no way of directly forcing a messenger to carry the news to B, there is in fact a greal deal of social pressure on both groups to keep alive the connection between them. This arises from the general responsibility placed on everyone to preserve the peace, that is, to preserve the existing social order intact. If there are

8: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5

quarrels in a village the headman is blamed by the chief for not controlling his people well. All disputes are best settled out of court, even if they must be referred to court later on. Therefore a quarrel in village A brings to light all the alliances and cleavages which link A with other villages and differentiate it from them. The headman of A appeals to B for support, invoking the historical incident linking them, and hopes to settle affairs of his village with the authority of B's approval behind him. For if the headman of B is a potential ally he is also a potential rival, and the dissident section in A may themselves invoke their link with B and transfer their allegiance to him. Thus although the details of the relationship between A and B, and the historical incident connected with it, may not be widely known there is considerable external pressure on them to maintain their relationship. Connexions of this kind, mainly between villages, but also between chiefdoms, play a large part in contemporary Ngoni life. Men walk twenty miles to a funeral and women carry pots of beer all day in response to ties of this kind.

Thus we see, on the one hand, that tribal legends are widely known, relate to pre-conquest times, and do not directly influence conduct; and, on the other, that legends associated with inter-group relations are known only by the groups concerned, may relate to either before or after 1898, and do directly influence action. Why is there this difference? We may regard the former legends as of significance mainly in external relations and the latter in internal. Within the tribe, and more particularly within the minor chiefdom, inter-group relations are still largely determined by Ngoni themselves, however much they may have altered in form and content since 1898 and however much Ngoni are part of a wide system. Movement between villages is only slightly controlled by the Administration and in quarrelling, in marriage and adultery, beer-drinking and hoeing, Ngoni men and women choose their own allies and enemies. Incidents in reality give rise to inter-group relations and are subsequently invoked to maintain them. History is written not in books but in the names of groups and in the remembered connexions between them, and as these connexions gradually change so local legendary history is gradually rewritten.

In external relations the Ngoni never act as a tribe except within the framework of European-controlled institutions. As yet no myth of origin is needed to explain the fact that Ngoni and Cewa representatives sit together on the Provincial Council save that the Administration put them there. The world of external relations is one of cultural heterogeneity and comparative adequate documentation. In this field legends have only a limited social function. They differentiate tribe X from tribe Y but do not relate them to each other.

Lastly we must consider Ngoni history proper. There have been many alleged accounts of Ngoni history published in Europe and South Africa, but these seem to have had little influence on the Fort Jameson Ngoni. Recently several histories have appeared in the vernacular, and tribal history

9: Read E-5 (1935) 1936 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Maravi FR4

people of Mpezeni'. When questioned, they acknowledged their local origin as Nsenga or Chewa by kinship and clan, but claimed the name Ngoni in terms of their political allegiance. It is worth while mentioning here that this claim to be Ngoni is made with even more force when men are away from home on the mines or at other work. I found men on the Northern Rhodesian Copper Belt and in Johannesburg assert emphatically that they were Ngoni because they were the people of Mpezeni or Gomani, at the same time giving their clan names with a grin because they knew it would reveal their Chewa or Nsenga origin. It is 'the thing' to pass as Ngoni if you can carry it off and in strange places—where the acid test of the clan name is not known—it is easy to do this. A group of Nyasaland men newly arrived on the Crown Mines in Johannesburg told me confidentially, 'Here we say only, "We are all Ngoni". You know that our clan names are Chewa or Tumbuka, but we are the people of Gomani or of Mwambera, and so we say we are Ngoni. And then people are respecting us.' The prestige in the name Ngoni is a matter of pride, not only in their own country, but far and wide in Africa.

The chiefs and other important men among the Ngoni recognize that they are a very mixed group ethnically. When asked, 'What is the meaning of a clan?' they reply, 'It shows a man's tribe that we may know how to respect him.'[1] It is hardly correct, therefore, to speak of the Ngoni as a tribe, for from Natal to Tanganyika men of many 'tribes' joined, or were captured and forcibly assimilated by, the original nucleus of Zulu and Swazi warriors, to be welded by their

[1] I avoid using vernacular terms in this article because usually the Ngoni, Chewa, Nsenga, and Tumbuka terms are all different. The field worker has to make a comparative linguistic table giving equivalent meanings in vernacular terms. Here I use the English word 'clan' to express the unilateral group according to kinship descent. 'Tribe' should be used in a cultural sense, of a group of people possessing a common language and common institutions. The ambiguity with which 'tribe' and its vernacular equivalents is used, by Europeans and Africans alike, necessitates an investigation on linguistic and historical lines. The so-called Chewa tribe, for example, rarely, if ever, use the word Chewa, but refer to themselves as Ntumba, Maravi, &c. The Ngoni, speaking of themselves in the south, refer to the Ndwandwe, Ntungwa, &c., and only use the 'blanket term' Zulu or Swazi when they think you are ignorant of the finer distinctions. I use the word 'tribe' here to express these distinctive groups, but it is impossible to avoid some ambiguity without long linguistic digressions.

9: Read E-5 (1935) 1936 FR5 Ngoni FR5

political and military organization into an effective group. What meaning, therefore, can we give to the term 'Ngoni', and how can this group which calls itself Ngoni be analysed into its component parts?

II. WHAT DOES THE TERM 'NGONI' MEAN? The references made hitherto show that the term 'Ngoni' is used in several different connotations. It is, strictly speaking, an historical linguistic term, and referred originally to that group of clans described as 'Nguni' because they spoke a language classified to-day as the Nguni dialects.[1] Somewhere on the march north the Ngoni changed the *u* to an *o*, and arrived in their present areas saying 'We are Ngoni'. They assert emphatically that it was on the march they began to say 'We are Ngoni', and they suggest that it was important to have some general term to cover individuals from many mixed groups.

The name Ngoni having been assumed on the march north, it obviously at first only covered those clans which were of true southern origin, or as we should say to-day, of Zulu or Swazi stock. This is the meaning which Ngoni still has when used in its narrow or strict sense to-day. In collecting the clan names in a village, for example, the headman says 'Those are Ngoni, those are Makalanga, those are Nsenga', and so on. The true Ngoni clans are those most highly honoured, the real aristocrats, and a little experience teaches the field worker to recognize their bearing as they walk about among the rest. In a village containing several clans, the houses of the Ngoni clans occupy the most honourable places in the middle of the horse-shoe formation surrounding the cattle kraal. In any meeting at a chief's village the men and women of Ngoni clans sit nearest to the chief and drink beer before the rest. This ranking by clans, however, does not stop at the true Ngoni. They lead the hierarchy, but other clans also claim precedence in a rough geographical order of the tribes absorbed from south to north. The true Ngoni illustrate this by saying, 'In old days the only men who were made *indunas* were those of the Swazi, Zulu, Suto, and Tonga clans. After we settled here, *indunas* were made from the Makalanga, Nsenga, and Sukuma clans'. There is therefore

[1] See *Bantu Studies*, Sept. 1934, for classification of the South African languages. Also A. T. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, for list of Nguni clans.

9: Read E-5 (1935) 1936 FR5 Ngoni FR5

We have also to recognize that the wider connotation of the word is in constant use to-day, and it will be apparent in the course of this article that those who like to be thought Ngoni but have no real claim to the name, find ways in which to identify themselves with the real Ngoni, and to impress upon outsiders that they share the distinction of that name.

III. NGONI SOCIETY AS A CULTURAL UNIT. It is evident that the field worker who tries to describe and analyse the society which is found in the Ngoni areas to-day has some difficulty in establishing appropriate and correct terms. Here is a society which is a compound of ethnic units, subdivided into clans according to kinship, stratified into ranks, held together by a ruling aristocracy and a strong centralized political organization. This society differs radically from that of a homogeneous community where the sociological structure has gone through a long process of integration or disintegration, or has remained static over a period of time. The Ngoni created their 'state', that is, their present political and social units, within a relatively short period by a series of deliberate acts. They brought with them a pattern of society from the south; they modified[1] it during their forty odd years of wandering and warfare; and they moulded it finally when they settled in their present areas. Within this deliberately created social structure the principles of centralization and rank were dominant. Based on these two principles the Ngoni set up, in an alien milieu, the institutions of chieftainship,[2] of military training, of systematized law courts, of recognized ranks in society, of patrilineal succession and inheritance, speaking among themselves a language foreign to the country. The resultant society, a compound of the Ngoni ruling aristocracy and the conquered indigenous people, formed the Ngoni state. So conscious was all this social engineering that old men to-day can give detailed accounts of the various processes, political, legal, military, by which the conquerors and conquered were brought under one rule.[3] Borrowing a term from European history,

[1] One striking modification was the replacing of the village as a small kinship group by villages of hundreds of huts, with an elaborate organization into hamlets.

[2] Using chieftainship in the sense of the Ngoni *inkosi* whose office and powers were very different from those of the surrounding petty chiefs.

[3] As one of these processes, the piercing of the ear-lobes became the 'tribal

it might almost be called nation-building. And when you have heard the Ngoni Paramount discuss the position of minorities in his country, and his claim to territories no longer under his rule, you could almost imagine you were in the corridors of the League Secretariat at Geneva.

The Ngoni state, however, to-day is not only a political structure, a framework for political and social life. Within that structure, forming parts of it, are institutions embodying those social, political, economic, and ethical values which are peculiarly Ngoni. The Ngoni, that is to say, when they absorbed other peoples into their state, imposed upon them a new social order together with the values inherent in that order. Patrilineal succession and inheritance, for example, introduced by the Ngoni, was bound up with the relations of father to son, the acquiring and distribution of cattle, the worship of clan and family ancestors. Each institution had its clearly related rules and values, and these are made explicit by the Ngoni when they describe them. The casual European observer in the country sees only the Paramount Chief and his subordinate chiefs ruling over a welter of tribes with a confusing mixture of social behaviour. To the Ngoni, however, and to the anthropologist who follows their lead, the pattern of society which they set up is clear and definite; it has a cultural reality of its own. The seeming welter of tribes is in reality an ordered relationship. Each group, tribe, or clan, has its recognized place *vis-à-vis* other groups. Within that ordered relationship the different groups have pursued a process of preserving some customs and adopting others, and they can give a coherent account of what they have retained and what they have borrowed. The real Ngoni do not admit to borrowing much. They like to think of their society as very distinctive as well as being well integrated. Yet the degree of modification in Ngoni society needs very close investigation because it shows much variety in different localities.

When they entered their present areas the Ngoni were very inferior in numbers to the indigenous people. How was it then that they were able to subdue them? And having subdued them, how did they pre-

mark' of the Ngoni as various forms of tattooing were of other tribes. Ear-piercing was sometimes forced (i.e. upon captives taken in war), sometimes voluntary. To-day children of local clans are teased by children of Ngoni clans and called 'Chewa' if they have not had their ears pierced, and they beg their mothers to take them to the 'doctor' to be 'made Ngoni'.

down fully and correctly. When I arrived in Chief Gomani's country, after having stayed in the other two Ngoni areas, the chiefs and leading men whom he called to see me asked at once, 'What did the other Ngoni do to show you they were Ngoni? *We* want you first to hear the story of our people.' If I said to any older man of good standing, that is of a true Ngoni clan, 'Tell me about the Ngoni', he invariably began with the traditions of the south and their trek north.

I have some fifteen long texts[1] of Ngoni history, most of which begin with the stories of Dingiswayo and Zwidi, leading on to the rise of Chaka and the Ngoni exodus from the south. These texts not only show a measure of agreement with each other, but they also are verifiable by established history as recorded by Europeans. Those texts which came from Gomani's country contain different material after the exodus from the south. For the Ngoni under the leadership of the Maseko clan came north with Mzilikazi and the Matabele, and crossing the Zambesi alone, went east of Lake Nyasa into Tanganyika.[2] The main Ngoni group under the Jere clan went west of Lake Nyasa into Tanganyika, and remained a united group until the death of Zwangendaba in 1848. A disputed succession followed and the Ngoni split up under two rival Paramounts, Mpezeni and Mwambera. The history of those years, as related to-day, is largely concerned with proving in each area that their Paramount is the only rightful one, the only one to whom the royal salute *Bayete* should be given. Mpezeni's historians say, 'Mwambera snatched *Bayete*'—and vice versa. In spite of these divergences in later history, however, the Ngoni point to their earlier history and say, 'You see we are all one people'. They are conscious of, and troubled about, their present divisions and inclined to attribute them to our premature arrival in the country. 'You came too soon. We would have fought until there was only one *inkosi*.'

The detailed knowledge of Ngoni history is regarded as the province of a specialist. 'How can a man of no wisdom remember all those names?' From time to time 'historians' tell episodes of this traditional history in the villages of the Paramount or of other im-

[1] 800–1,000 words.

[2] This is their own account and is confirmed by the Rev. Charles Stuart, formerly at Ekwendeni, but not so far recorded by other Europeans.

9: Read E-5 (1935) 1936 FR5 Ngoni FR5

history in order to prove their unity with the true Ngoni. It is nevertheless recognized that the aristocrats, through their kinship links with the past, have the best knowledge; the rest listen and defer to them. For matters relating to history are no antiquarian interest to the Ngoni. It is probable that recalling history and dwelling on the great days of the past is to some extent a compensation for what the Ngoni consider the indignities of their position to-day. Yet it is also a stimulus to them to maintain their separate identity and to revere their institutions. Tradition supports rank, by recognizing the historical importance of certain clans; and rank preserves tradition because intimate knowledge is the proud monopoly of certain families.

V. TRADITION AND LEGEND AS DOCUMENTATION. To the anthropologist who examines the part played by tradition and legend in the culture of a people, Professor Malinowski has given an invaluable lead. He suggests that myths are the charter and documentation for traditional tribal life, 'statements of reality which live in the institutions and pursuits of the people';[1] and that legend is re-interpreted history. All peoples of whatever level of civilization interpret history in the light of their beliefs about themselves, their achievements, and their destiny. The Ngoni are no exception to this. Sometimes they relate factual history which is verifiable and accurate. At other times it is probably part fact, part fiction. Yet at all times the emphasis in, and interpretation of, tradition, has a definite purpose, and it is possible to see how a standardized form of a narrative has come to be accepted and believed in. The version of a narrative at one time was interpreted or moulded to serve a purpose. Having been established, it then moulds the thinking of the people on that particular issue. The vexed question of the supremacy of the two Paramounts, Mpezeni and Mwambera[2] is a case in point. The basis of the story of the original dispute is the same, but the versions as told in each 'country' differ in a succession of minute details, whose arrangement and emphasis prove the point in each case. Mpezeni's historians have arranged the details to prove that he is the rightful *inkosi*; Mwambera's historians

[1] B. Malinowski. Article on Culture in *Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*.

[2] The two Paramounts at present holding these titles are grandsons of the first holders, to whom I refer as old Mpezeni.

9: Read E-5 (1935) 1936 FR5 Ngoni FR5

do the same. And in each area the versions as recited convince the people that their *inkosi* is supreme. The main purpose of the tradition was to show that there cannot be more than one rightful *inkosi* of the Ngoni. The present-day interpretations serve the same purpose and exalt one of the two claimants at the expense of the other.

The traditions centring round the person of Zwangendaba are numerous. Some of these are concerned to show that he was an important chief in the south under Zwidi, and that the Jere clan of which he was head was a leading one. Other accounts do not disguise that he was an upstart, but lay stress on his success as leader of the Ngoni in their trek north. All these traditions about Zwangendaba are told as documentation for the importance of the *inkosi*, and centre round the Ngoni belief that their state must have one head in whom authority is centralized. It is easy to see that the circumstances under which the Ngoni state was created demanded a strong autocratic ruler. The traditions gathered round this first ruler of their state now serve to perpetuate the beliefs about the office of Paramount Chief, beliefs which modern ideas and western education have hardly modified at all.

Ngoni history divides into three periods, and the traditions in each period, as they are told, form the people's thinking about that section of their past. The traditions of the earliest period, that is, of their life in the south and their trek north, are the charter for their pride as a distinctive people. The traditions of the middle period, of their conquests and settlements, document their superiority over the surrounding peoples. The traditions of the last period, that of the arrival of the European, determine their attitude towards white contact. Their interpretation of their history, therefore, reflected in the established legends and tradition, influences profoundly their thinking about themselves, about their neighbours, and about the Europeans.

VI. Prelude to White Contact. This second period of Ngoni history includes the events from the crossing of the Zambezi to the coming of the Europeans, roughly the years 1835–1885. During these fifty years the original Ngoni horde, with additions to it from the tribes south of the Zambezi, explored the country in which they were finally to settle, went farther north into Tanganyika, and finally

9: Read E-5 (1935) 1936 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Maravi FR4

returned between the years 1855–1865, to settle in their present habitat. The earlier part of the period was one of exploring and of conquest. The later part was the time of settlement and consolidation, during which the Ngoni 'states' emerged in the form in which they were found, when the Europeans first arrived.

The Ngoni in Mpezeni's country, when speaking of this time, call it *chamtendere* (the time of peace). Any white travellers' tales referring to these years lay stress on the constant raids carried out by the Ngoni, the fierceness of their warriors, and their ravaging of the countryside for slaves and cattle. It was obviously a time of frequent wars. Why then do the Ngoni call it a time of peace? I have asked this question of many men of rank and standing and they give one invariable reply, 'We call it *chamtendere* because the *Azungu* (Europeans) were not there to trouble us'. This statement is in effect the key to Ngoni thinking about the days of pre-white contact, and also about the advent of the Europeans. The way in which they speak of *chamtendere* is itself significant. I first heard it during a long recital of Ngoni history, and stopped the narrator to ask the meaning of the word. There was instantly an embarrassed silence and self-conscious grins in the group. The word had evidently slipped out unawares, for later on they told me that it was a word they only used among themselves. Having once been used, however, it appeared frequently in conversations with me, and proved a useful starting-point for accounts of the organization of their own state and the effects on it of the European advent. 'Ah, *chamtendere*', they say, with a deep sigh, 'then we were people'. It proved also to be a pass-word to their confidence, for whenever I mentioned *chamtendere* to a village headman, he and his notables nudged each other, and laughed and said, 'She can know about us'. When pressed to be more specific about this 'troubling' by the *Azungu* they spoke of taxes, of the ban upon raiding and warfare, of young men being called away to work, of their land being taken for European farms. These restrictions and disabilities caused by white contact they regarded as warfare, that is, as troubled times, because the Europeans forcibly prevented them from doing as they liked, just as they had done in their day to the surrounding tribes. The conquered tribes, on the other hand, naturally hailed the advent of the Europeans as a time of peace and security. Therein lies the chief

9: Read E-5 (1935) 1936 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Maravi FR4

difference to-day between the attitude of the Ngoni to the Europeans and that of the Chewa, for example. In the vernacular expression the Ngoni say, 'The Europeans spoiled our country'; the Chewa say, 'The Europeans saved us'.

Chamtendere, then, was the period of Ngoni supremacy, when they established by force of arms their right to rule over the country and its indigenous inhabitants. There was, however, some difference between the political organization of the Ngoni as a conquering horde on the march, and their organization when they finally settled in their present areas. At both times the focus of their organization was warfare—they were a nation under arms. But once settled on land which they had chosen they began to spread a network of political organization over the country, and to plan in terms of 'countries'[1] instead of mobile villages. To-day when they discuss the advent of the Europeans and the consequent 'spoiling' of their country, they recall the days when extensive tribute was paid to their Paramount Chief, chiefs were free to choose good sites for their very big villages, the outlying areas were ruled by *indumas* and lesser chiefs. It was the partial breaking up of this centralized political organization which they regarded as 'spoiling their country', as well as the economic restrictions with regard to land and the prohibition of raiding for new supplies of cattle.

During this time of Ngoni supremacy Ngoni institutions flourished —those institutions which they had brought with them from the south and preserved through their wanderings. When they are telling to-day about these years they speak fervently and reverently of the part played by the Paramount Chief in every side of life, the training for warfare of all the young men, the instruction and supervision of young chiefs by old *indumas*, Ngoni marriage and initiation ceremonies. It was during this time in Mpezeni's country that the *Inqwala* or first fruits ceremony was regularly observed at Mtenguleni, the village of the mother of old Mpezeni.[2] At this ceremony the Paramount Chief 'opened' the new food season by the ritual eating of new fruits, especially young maize and pumpkins. It was also the

[1] i.e. chiefs' areas.

[2] The description of this *Inqwala* given by men and women who took part in it in their youth shows much similarity to the *Inqwala* of to-day among the Swazi.

9: Read , E-5 (1935) 1936 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Maravi FR4

occasion on which he made known any new laws before the assembled leaders of his country. The ceremony was marked by special songs and dances performed only at that time. It was an occasion on which economics, religion, politics, social life and recreation were brought together in a dramatic form in the part played by the Paramount Chief *vis-à-vis* his people. When speaking of these ' good old days ' the Ngoni always refer to the *Inqwala*, for it was to them symbolic of the greatness of their *Inkosi*, and of how ' they lived well ' before the *Azungu* came as despoilers.

On the subject of warfare and of training for war the Ngoni will talk for hours. Among the many things which they mourn in the passing of the old order, they regret most the military training of youths and men, and the age-grade system which was part of it. They point out how a youth had his appointed companions to whom he stood in a recognized relationship of mutual obligation and assistance, and with these companions he went through the grades of calf-herding and cattle-herding until he graduated into a regiment. The field worker can observe how much Ngoni ' national feeling ' was bound up with memories of war days, when to-day they put on their war dress and dance war dances at a chief's village. I have seen Chewa men and women huddle together during these war dances, and mutter, ' Too many Ngoni are here ', as if they were still in the days of fighting and raids, while the Ngoni warriors swagger about, swishing their kilts of skins and brandishing their shields and spears with every appearance of reality. I have heard accounts of Ngoni raids for cattle going as far as the Kafue River, into the Mashukulumbwe country, given with such details of the places on the march that I think they must be substantially correct. Even if it is legendary, the recital of such raids still fosters Ngoni pride and distinction, and I have heard an old man who took part in such a raid compare it scornfully with young men going nowadays to Broken Hill and the Copper Belt. ' They go only for money ', he said, ' We went for our *izidlodlo*[1] and for cattle to honour the *inkosi* '.

The Ngoni are realists and they admit that while they planted their institutions in the country and maintained most of them, at the same time a measure of adjustment was going on to the local cultures. For

[1] Head-ring, the sign of a warrior ready to marry.

9: Read E-5 (1935) 1936 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Maravi FR4

this they put the blame on the women. They point out that while they were on the march the local women they picked up, with their different language and customs, had not a great deal of influence on the community. Once they were settled, however, and married local women, those women went visiting to their own homes and took their children with them, and gradually a pronounced alien element and another language penetrated into Ngoni society. This is illustrated very well in the girls' initiation ceremonies, which differ very much in Ngoni and Chewa society. Ngoni men and women tell you with disgust how the *chinamwali*, the Chewa ceremony, began to be practised in Ngoni villages in place of the *umsindo* or *umgonxo* of the Ngoni. It was the only occasion on which I have heard them commend the action of the missionaries in putting down a custom, for they really despised the ceremonial and associations of the *chinamwali*, and rather than have it among them, they preferred outside help in putting it down.

The Ngoni dislike very much being asked point blank what cultural adjustments they made due to Chewa and other local customs. They admit reluctantly one or two minor adaptations, and proceed immediately to tell the major changes which they forced on the Chewa and others living under their rule. The chief adjustment by the Ngoni has undoubtedly been the adoption of the local language, as being the language of the women. Ngoni women of good family still speak Ngoni, but I have not found any instances of local women married to Ngoni men who have learned it. One of the perennial topics among the elders in an Ngoni village is the ' bad ' influence of the women on the children. When pressed to explain the nature of this ' bad ' influence, they say, ' The children are learning only the customs of the women. They cannot know about the Ngoni '. They lament the vanishing of the age-grades as the natural channels for instruction of young men in Ngoni customs, though they say with their characteristic realism, ' What is the good of having age grades and regiments when there is no war? '

If we were to attempt to reconstruct old Ngoni society as it was in the days before white contact, it is to this period, *chamtendere*, we should turn. There we can find the structure of Ngoni society, the distinctive Ngoni institutions, and Ngoni supremacy over the surrounding tribes as a reality. When the first white people arrived, as

9: Read E-5 (1935) 1936 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Maravi FR4

work in Southern Rhodesia and the Union. This exodus to the south in its turn brought the Ngoni into touch once more with the Matabele, the Zulu, and the Swazi, and reawakened their consciousness of their southern origin. It is significant that just at the point when their power in their own country received a crushing blow, they came into contact once more in the south with the stock from which they had sprung and to whom they could still speak in their own language. The anthropologist who looks for the reason why the distinctive Ngoni culture did not die out entirely after their military defeat and the advent of the whites, can see at least part of the reason supplied by the results of this economic exodus to work in the south. When the other tribes in the neighbourhood were, in the Ngoni phrase, 'running always to the Boma' and incidentally picking up fragments of European customs, the Ngoni remained, according to their own account, to a great extent aloof and were strengthened in this aloofness by their renewed southern connexions.

Ngoni supremacy over the country was at an end. The Europeans were the overlords of all the tribes, not the Ngoni. Instead of one big chief in the country, many small ones were now recognized who dared to give themselves airs because they knew the Ngoni could not compel allegiance to their Paramount. Chewa people living under Ngoni chiefs could no longer be forced to stay there, therefore a different attitude towards them was necessary. 'Chewa' could no longer be synonymous with 'slave'. I have heard Ngoni chiefs in court address their *indunas* and headmen many times on behaving well to people of other tribes 'Or they will leave us and to-day we cannot make them return'. A recent case in which a young chief, but a very important one, was summoned to the Paramount's court for insulting a Chewa woman, was made the occasion by the Paramount for a long public discourse on the present relations between Ngoni and Chewa, pointing out that an Ngoni chief whose Chewa subjects left him would 'spoil his country' and 'all his people would be ashamed'. Ngoni prestige, in fact, having lost the support of military power, had to rely on other sanctions. In their own eyes, their prestige was still due to their southern origin, their success in creating the Ngoni state in an alien milieu, and those distinctive institutions which they had retained. To the surrounding people, to the Chewa and other tribes,

10: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1959
FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

273 recipient usually takes the lead in praising, and his praise is chorused by the rest of the people in the hut.

The first jar, then, is divided by the owner himself and the bowlfuls are given to his village neighbours. The next jar is given to the headman or lieutenant of the village for division, and it is with the drinking of this jar that the party is held really to begin. The first bowl of this second jar is given by the divider of the beer back to the owner of the beer, who praises the divider before drinking. The second bowl goes to some other lieutenant or, if there is no other village lieutenant, to some important woman. Successive bowls go to other important people in the village. Subsequent jars are usually given to important visitors from other villages, who will allocate the bowls to their companions and to people in the host village. The first bowl of each jar goes to the divider of the jar, and the dregs, which are usually taken as the two last bowlfuls in each jar, and which are poured out after the jar has been tilted on its side, go to the dispenser of the beer, and to anyone who has been helping him.

There is a great deal of freedom in the allocation of beer in this way, and the complaints of people who hoped to be given beer and who were unfortunate are an invariable aftermath of any beer-party. It is important to note that the quantity of beer consumed by any individual is to some extent independent of the allocation of the jars and bowls. There are usually two or three bowls in use, and these are all filled up at each round. This means that most people in the hut drink each time. But what is remembered is not the beer drunk, but the method of allocation. Even if a man becomes intoxicated, he may yet complain the next day to his friends that the owner of the beer was miserly and lacking in generosity if no jar or bowl was specifically allocated to him. There is an obligation to return gifts of beer made in
[431] this way, so that a man can ensure a favourable reception for himself in other villages where there is beer, by his generosity and sagacity in distributing when there is beer in his own house.

262 The importance attached to beer-drinking is well brought out in
273 some essays written by schoolboys on the topic 'What I want to do when I leave school'. One of the boys wrote: 'Beer and cattle are the food of the Ngoni. . . . If your friend comes and he doesn't get beer and meat, then although he gets porridge, he still says that there was hunger in the house.' Another said: 'I will brew beer very often. Our life depends on drinking beer.' The small importance attached to beer
[829] by the neighbouring Cewa tribe is well known to the Ngoni, and one

10: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1959
FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

sophisticated informant remarked: 'The Cewa are just slaves, they merely eat. The Ngoni are like the Whites; they eat little and drink much.'

Economic Co-operation

There are other activities which entail inter-village ties. Cattle seek their own fodder, but small stock, pigs, goats, and sheep, are fed on husks and other scraps. A man whose animals have increased beyond his ability to feed them will farm out some of them to his friends, either in his own village or in some neighbouring one. The tender of the animals then exercises some control over the disposal of any natural increase and at the end of the arrangement he is entitled to be given one of the animals. The friends whom a man selects for this task are not always close relatives, and may sometimes be people to whom he can trace no genealogical relationship at all, but whom he may have met, for instance, in Southern Rhodesia. Other people acquire a reputation for integrity, and may be given animals to look after by their acquaintances. Cattle are not disposed of so widely, and there is more often a kinship connexion between the owner and the tender. On the other hand, cattle are more susceptible than small stock to tsetse fly, and in consequence there are many people in the new areas that have been recently resettled who have to keep their cattle in the village of a relative or friend who lives in an area free from fly.

Harvesting of crops is carried out by members of the household except in the case of the aged, who will call on their relatives to help them. Hut-building, making a new section of a garden, clearing the ground prior to planting, and, in particular, weeding the garden during the wet season, are activities that are often carried out by collective effort. Women, particularly pairs of widows, may work together in each other's gardens turn and turn about, and a man may be able to call on relatives, particularly his sons-in-law, to help in his garden without paying them for it. Most of the outside assistance that may be required in a garden is raised by means of a beer-party. The man's wife brews beer, and it is made known in the village and round about that on such-and-such a day there will be a party to hoe in their garden. A dozen or so people go to the garden in the morning, and work until the task set by the owner of the garden is completed. They then move to the village, and are refreshed with beer. Attendance at the beer-party is not restricted to those who have worked in the garden, and at some such parties a jar of beer may be specifically allocated to